

TERYOSHA





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A RUSSIAN FOLK STORY
TOLD BY ALEXEI TOLSTOY

Translated from the Russian by *Olga Shartse*

Drawings by *Yulian Korovin*



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Once upon a time there lived an old man and his wife who had no children, and were very lonely.

One day, the old man shaped a piece of wood, and the old woman wrapped it up and rocked it like a baby, singing:





Close your pretty eyes, Teryosha,
Sleep, my darling child!
All the finches and the thrushes,
All the hares and foxes wild
Have gone bye-byes in the forest,
Sleep, my darling child!

Little by little, the piece of wood they called Teryosha began to change into a real child, and before long he grew into a big and clever boy.





The old man made a boat for him, painting it white, and a pair of paddles, which he painted red.

Teryosha got into the boat, and said:

My little white boat, do as I wish
And take me to where there's plenty of fish.

The little white boat obeyed, and took Teryosha far out into the river. After that, he went fishing every day, and at midday his





mother would bring him his lunch and, standing on the bank, sing out:

Come and eat your lunch, Teryosha sonny,
There's milk, and curds, and bread and honey!

Teryosha, hearing his mother's voice from afar, would paddle to the bank and come ashore. His mother would take the fish he had caught, give him his lunch, change his shirt and belt, and let him go out in his boat again.



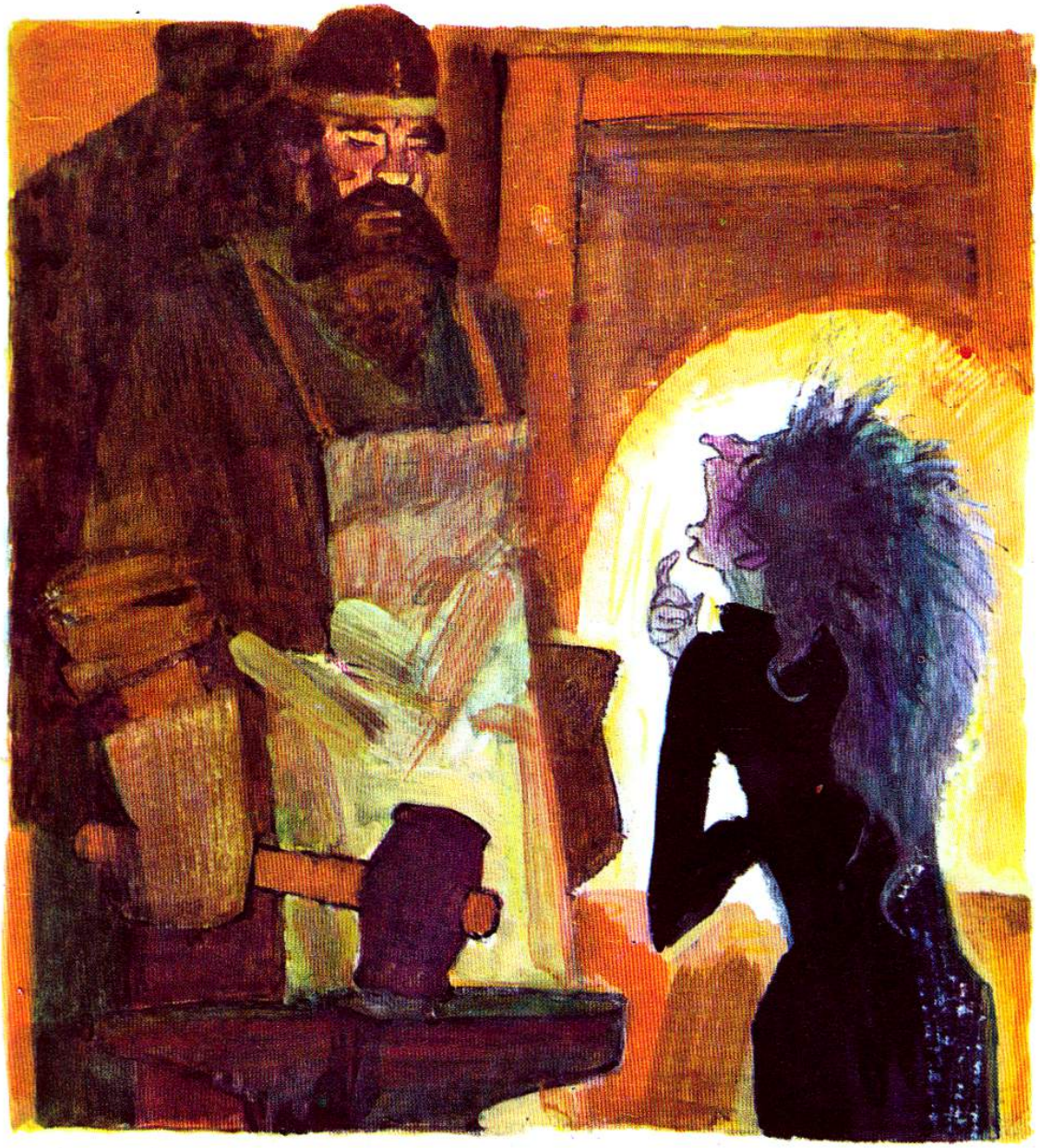


The Witch saw and heard all this. And so, one day she came to the bank and called in her ugly voice:

Come and eat your lunch, Teryosha sonny,
There's milk, and curds, and bread and honey!

Teryosha knew it was not his mother's voice, and urged his little white boat to take him as far away from the bank as it could.





The Witch ran to the blacksmith and told him to re-fashion her throat so that her voice would sound as sweet as that of Teryosha's mother.



The blacksmith did his best. And then the Witch came to the bank and called:

Come and eat your lunch, Teryosha sonny,
There's milk, and curds, and bread and honey!



Teryosha thought it was his mother calling, for the voice was exactly like hers, and paddled to the bank.

The Witch grabbed him, stuffed him into her bag, and carried him to her cottage in the forest. She told her daughter Alyonka to light the stove and roast Teryosha for dinner, while she was away doing more wickedness.

Alyonka got the fire going, and when the oven was very, very hot, ordered Teryosha to lie flat on the shovel. But he sat on it, instead of lying down, threw out his arms and legs and try as she might Alyonka could not push him into the oven.

"I told you to lie flat," she snapped at him.

"I don't know how. You show me...," Teryosha replied.

"Lie down the way cats sleep and dogs sleep, that's how."

"You show me anyway."





Alyonka lay down on the shovel, and Teryosha quickly pushed her into the oven and clamped the oven door shut. He ran outside and climbed to the top of an old oak, because he saw the Witch returning home.

The Witch opened the oven, gobbled up Alyonka and picked the bones clean. When she had stuffed herself, she came outside and started rolling in the grass, chanting:

I'll take a roll, and I'll take a loll,
With Teryosha's meat I'm nice and full!

Teryosha replied quietly from the top of the oak:



"With Alyonka's meat you're full."

The Witch thought it was simply the oak leaves rustling in the wind, and went on chanting:

I'll take a roll, and I'll take a loll,
With Teryosha's meat I'm nice and full!

And again Teryosha said:

"With Alyonka's meat you're full."

The Witch looked up and saw him sitting in the tree. She rushed at the oak and tried to bite it across. She bit and she bit, broke two of her front teeth, and ran to the blacksmith:





"Make me two iron teeth, quickly."

The blacksmith made her two iron teeth, and she went back to bite the oak across. She bit and she bit, and broke two of her lower front teeth.

She ran to the blacksmith again, and told him to make her two more iron teeth. The blacksmith did as he was told.

Now she went at the oak so hard that chips flew to right and left. The oak was beginning to creak and sway.



What was Teryosha to do? Suddenly he saw a flock of geese flying overhead, and he begged them:

Oh, good friends, oh darling geese,
Take me home to mother, please!

But the geese replied:

"Another flock's close behind, the geese are feebler than we are, they'll take you."

Now the Witch would take a bite or two, give Teryosha a glare, smack her lips, and go on biting at the tree.

Another flock came along, and Teryosha begged:

Oh, good friends, oh darling geese,
Take me home to mother, please!

And the geese replied:

"There's a pecked young goose coming behind us, he'll take you home!"

The Witch had only a little way to go before the oak toppled.

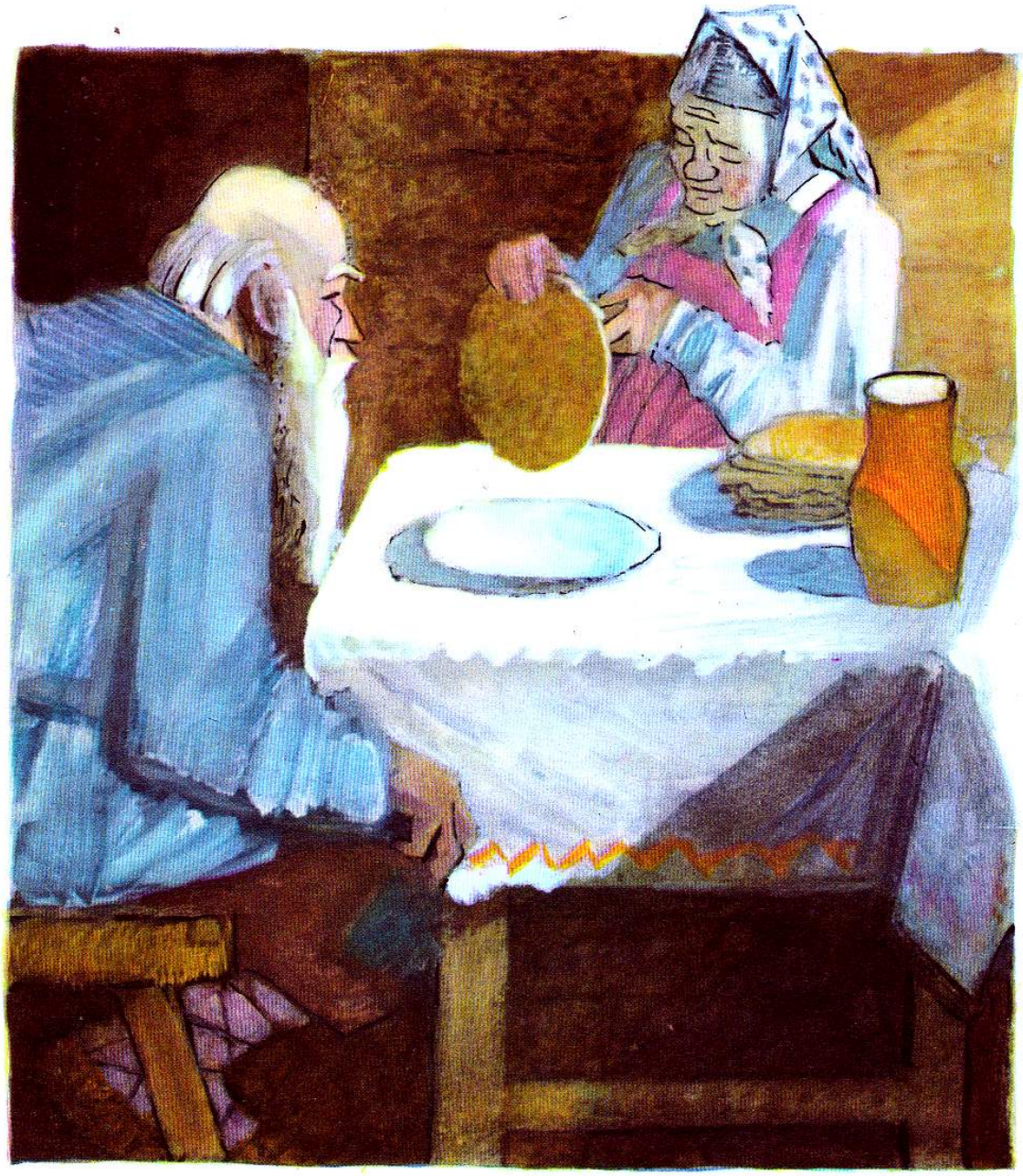




The pecked young goose came along, and Teryosha begged him:

You're the kindest of the geese,
Take me home to mother, please!

The pecked young goose took pity on Teryosha, came down to let him climb on to his back, and carried him home to mother.



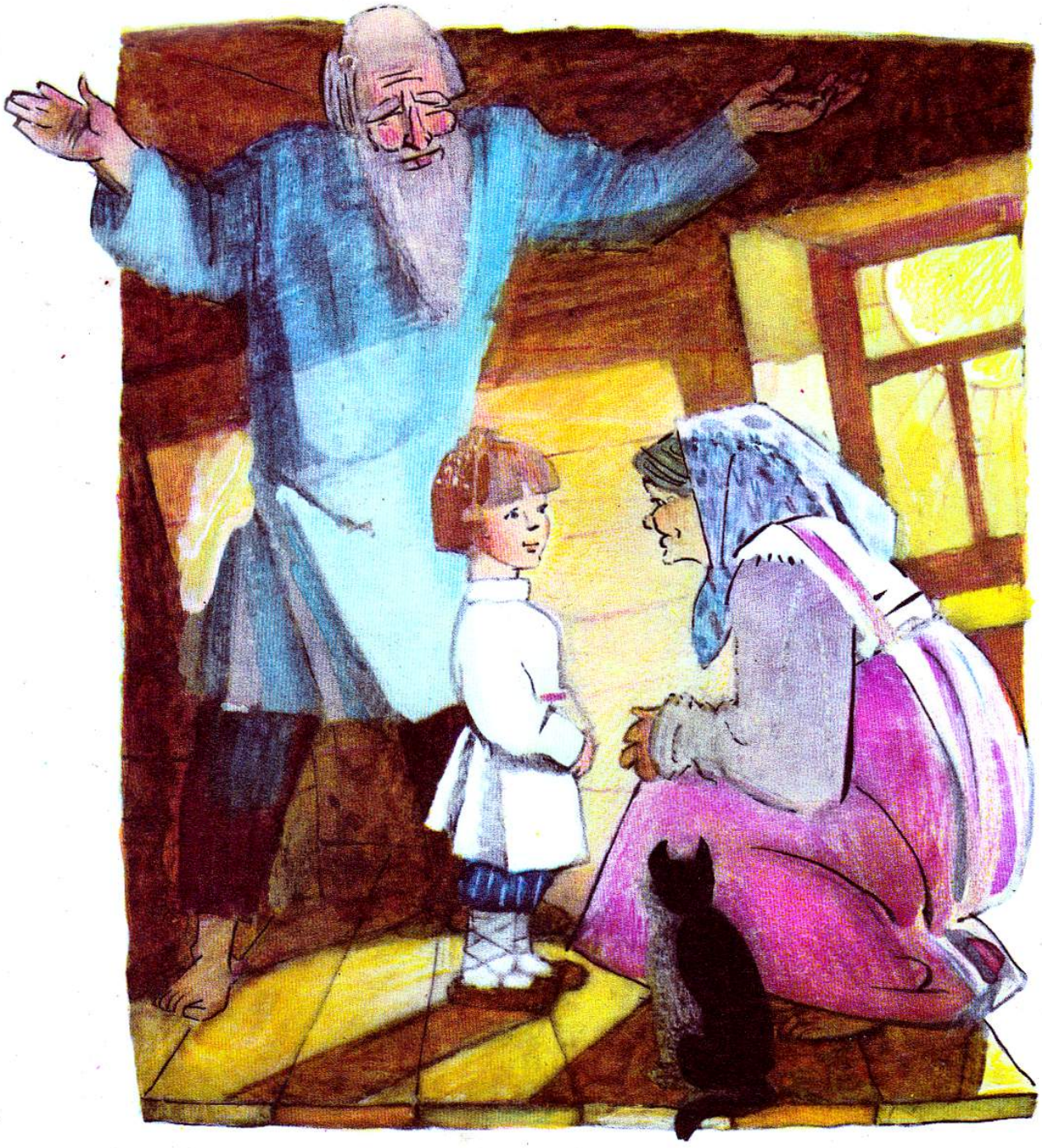
They came to the cottage and alighted on the grass right under the window.

The old woman had made some pancakes to remember Teryosha by, and handing one to the old man she said:

"Here's a pancake for you, and here's one for me."

"What about me?" Teryosha asked from where he was.
The old woman heard him, and said to the old man:
"Go outside and look who's asking for a pancake."



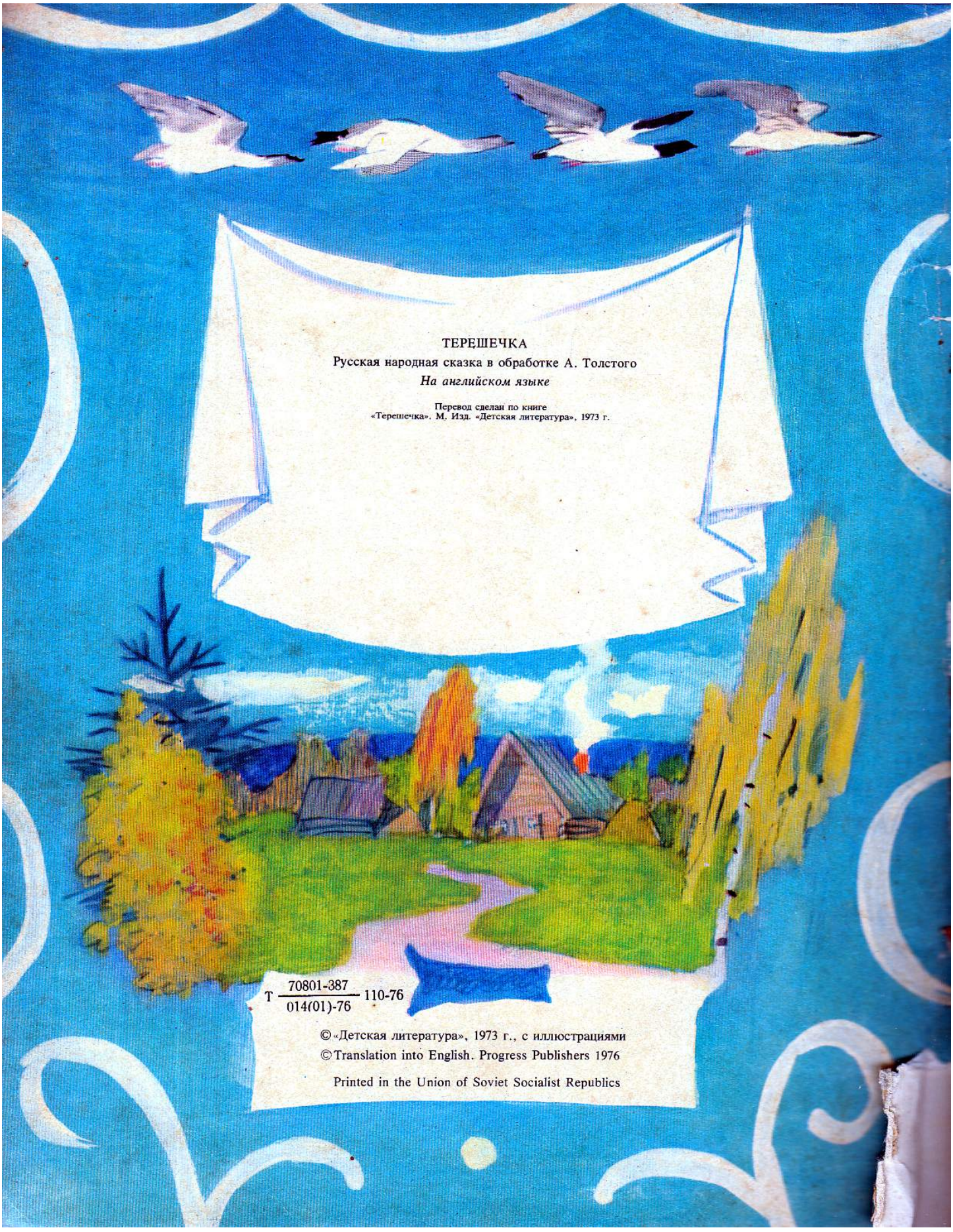


The old man went outside, saw Teryosha, took him home to the old woman, and she could not kiss and hug her darling son enough!



They gave the pecked goose all the food and water he wanted, and let him run free in the yard until he grew into a big and strong bird. He leads the flock now, flaps his wide wings and often remembers Teryosha.





ТЕРЕШЕЧКА

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